BI-MONTHLY

▽THE MAGAZINE FOR BISEXUALS

HCA.
115.

BI-MONTHLY No.17 *75p

ONE RENT BOY'S STORY
ROMANCE
A QUESTION OF RIGHTS
NEW FILMS
BEING BODY POSITIVE

PERSONAL ADS

TO REPLY TO A BOX NUMBER PUT YOUR LETTER INTO AN UNADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE WITH THE BOX NUMBER MARKED CLEARLY IN THE TOP LEFT HAND CORNER. PUT THIS INTO A LARGER ENVELOPE AND SEND TO BI-MOTHLY,BOX NUMBER REPLIES BOX BM-BI,LONDON WC1 3XX. Personal ads are free. And they can put you in touch with like-minded people all over the country.Write to:BI-MONTHLY,BOX BM-BI,LONDON WC1 3XX.

****

Bi-guy,38,traveller throughout UK, seeks other affectionate bi-guy or couples anywhere, under 50, for regular visits while 'on the road Clean, health-conscious, looking for good reliable friends.ALA. Box 17/1.

London; gay-orientated bisexual male, arts interests,30,tall,slim, wishes to meet similar man.Box 17/2.

Belfast. Cute,well-hung, lonely bisexual guy (21) seeks similar as secret friend. Photo please. Box 17/3.

Bi-female 24 seeks Bi/gay females/males for friendship/relationship. Enjoys People,music,cinema, Dancing,food,theatre, Sport.Glasgow area/ Edinburgh. Box 17/4.

Brighton.Live out your sexual fantasies with me! Beautiful (mind & body) 23 year old bearded man looking for wimmin to share in passionate safe sex.Poor, but can travel (motorbike) or accomodate Frank letters and photos appreciated.Box 17/5.

London;Bisexual male,25, boyish with blond hair, blue eyes and understanding lover, seeks bisexual women,men or couples (under 30 but any colour/ race) for friendship and safe fun.Photo please. Box 17/6.

Birmingham; Lesbian-identified bisexual woman would like to correspond with others anywhere on experiences of long-term celibacy, and life's other pleasures!Box 17/7.

Bisexual male(20),not unattractive,answers to name of Euan,living in sunny Stockport,who seeks other bisexuals (m/f) who would like to write to me and meet me. Interests:music,cycling, travelling and wine-making. I'd like similar folk who are quiet,interesting and not too tall! Photo not important but appreciated.Please write soon! Box 17/8.

Will anyone interested in setting up a group in the Bedford/Milton Keynes area please contact Box 17/9.

Conisbrough;Bisexual male married with family,age 40+ seeks friendship with male in similar circumstances Sheffield/Doncaster area. Box 17/10.

Bi-male 27 single new to London and Bi/gay scene generally.Looking for some friends who enjoy communication. I'm a quiet,non-yuppy graduate,into cycling, walking,backpacking. music and massage. Box 17/11.

Copenhagen.danish bisexual male,28, dark, good-looking,wants friend ship with sincere emancipated,handsome, bisexual english man. Interests:creativity, writing,art,classical music,travel,exchange of hospitality. Good photo essential. Box 16/2.

Is anyone interested in setting up a bisexual group in Glasgow ?If so, please contact GBG, PH7, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

The older lesbian and bisexual women's group is a non-scene group that meets for meals, etc. in London SW1. Telephone 01-979 0695 (6-8p.m.).

Anyone interested in forming Bi-groups in the West Midlands area please write to Alan Taman, 14 Whyle Road, Sutton Coldfield.

COMMERCIAL ADS

AD RATES.
Commercial ads are £1.00 for the 1st five lines(25 characters per line) and 25p per line thereafter.

'Achille's Heel' - an anti-sexist magazine produced by pro-feminist men. Details: 79 Pembroke Road, London E17.

Red Stripe, the condom for safer sex. £1.25/6 from Box BM-BI London WC1 3XX.

M.A.N. the man's anti-sexist newsletter now available 80p or £4.20 for six issues from 60, Rhmney Street, Cathays, Cardiff.

The Gay Bookclub offers over 50 titles per year at discount prices. Subscriptions £5 per year from PO Box 247, London N15 6RW, tel 01-800 5861.

Gay's The Word bookshop is open 7 days a week at 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1.

BISEXUAL GROUPS

BRITAIN

Manchester: meet at Resource Centre, 61 Bloom St. 1st Thursday monthly 830-10.00. Contact Paul Owen 236-5986(4-10pm) 228-3554(2-4pm).

Edinburgh Bisexual Group meets Thursdays at Lesbian & Gay Community Centre, 58a Broughton St. Details;Kate 031-556-0497

Contacts for Bisexuals in Nalgo: tel.Zadie 01-806-9264 or Dorothy 01-853-4402 (evenings) or write to Box BM BI, London WC1N 3XX.

Bisexual contact for Tyneside: Simon Henderson 31 Harrison Place, Sndyford, Newcastle-U-T NE2 1DE.

SIGMA: support for relationships where one partner is gay or bisexual. Details LLGS 01-837 7324.

Bisexuals and married gay group. Details: Nigel 01-558 5203 (5.30-10pm).

London Bisexual Women's Group meets in peoples houses. Details Lisa, 01-318 1179.

Brighton Bisexual Group meets on the first Tuesday of every month, 8pm at the Unemployed Centre, Prior House, Tilbury Place Brighton. Enclose S.A.E. when writing for details.

SHOUT! A CAMPAIGN GROUP FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MEN AND BISEXUALS. This group was recently formed as a response to growing nomophobia in the Establishment (esp. the media). Campaigning in defence of sexual minorities. The group will be visibly active in Glasgow.Anyone interested should contact SHOUT! Box No.19, 240 West Princes St. Glasgow.

The Radical Lesbian/Gay identified bisexual network: Pink Dandelion, the Basement, 69 Elm Grove, Brighton BN2 3ET.

The London Bisexual Group meets Mondays at the Fallen Angel, 8.30, 63 Graham St. London N1. Details: David 01-3405729

Bisexual Women's Drop-In 1st and 3rd Wednesday evenings of each month. Contact Des on 794-5543 or 586-1419 (London).

ABROAD

United States: Boston Bisexual Women's Network, PO Box 1534, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

San Francisco Bisexual Centre, 1757 Hayes St. Sn Frncisco CA 94117.

Chcago-Bi-ways PO Box A333 Q, Chicago ILL 60690

University of Massachusetts Bisexual Group, Amhurst MA 01002.

NEW YORK: Bisexual Support Group c/o Bill Himelhoch, 4861 Broadway Apt. No. 6-S. NY 10034 tel 212/569-3636.

The Bulletin Board PO Box 8556, New York NY 10150.

Netherlands: Landelijk Netwerk Biseksualiteit PO Box 5087, NL 1007AB, Amsterdam or telephone Vroomshoop 05498-44384.

West Germany: Initiative Bisexueller Frauen & Manner c/o E. Kocher, Am Nieddertal 31, D-6000 Frankfurt-A-M 90.

Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement 01-317 9690.

Gay Legal Advice 01- 821 7672. (Mon-Fri 7-10pm).

AIDS Helpline: Terrence Higgins Trust 01-8332971 (7-10 pm).

Lesbian Line 01-251 6911.

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard 01-837 7324.

leeds AIDS helpline Mondays and Thursdays 7-9 pm (0532) 444209.

Lesbian and Gay Youthline 031-228 4531. Mon, Wed 7-10 pm. Sun afternoon.

To find out how you could benefit from advertising in this space phone 01-737 5763.

BI-MONTHLY

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if you liked this issue then why not take out a subscription - it will show your support and makes future planning much easier. And there are lots of advantages when you subscribe:

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Return to: BI-MONTHLY
BM-BI, London WC1N 3XX.

THIS ISSUE

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WOMBOURNE 12 POLICE O
ALL CHARGES DROPPED

On Sun 21 Dec. a group of young people demonstrated in the garden of Bill Brownhill, the Conservative leader of South Staffordshire District Council.

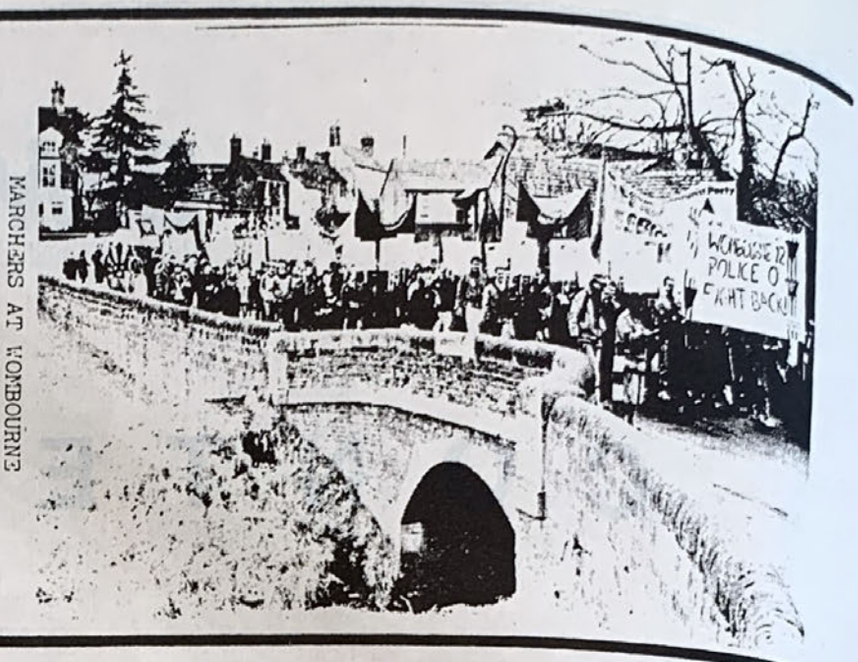
In a council debate a few days earlier Cllr Brownhill had said that as a cure for AIDS he would 'put 90% of queers in the ruddy gas chamber'.

Twelve, the 'Wombourne Twelve' were arrested and detained at Wombourne police station, near Wolverhampton.

They all spent an unpleasant Christmas week in prison as the police maintained that they didn't believe & couldn't verify the names & addresses given (despite at least four of the addresses having been checked the night before their first court hearing).

The police actions and violence, and the behaviour of the duty solicitor (who passed on information to the police & failed to challenge the prosecutor in court) has been heavily criticised.

Recently, the charges of 'threat 'threatening behaviour', & in one case of assault, were dropped. The planned protest march through the tiny Staffordshire village became instead a victory parade.



MARCHERS AT WOMBOURNE

Public Order Bill in Force

We are told the Public Order Bill, which came into effect on January 1st this year, will protect society from football hooligans and rioters. We are told the there has to be a balance between the right to protest, and the rights of everyone else in society who might be affected by a protest eg. people out shopping, or driving their cars.

The reality of the Bill is that the police will be able to dictate the size duration and location of all open air protests and social gatherings.

The Bill makes illegal all spontaneous marches and processions, as the police must be given seven days written notice.

The organisers of 'illegal' protests are punishable by 3 months in prison and a £2000 fine. Ordinary protestors are liable to arrest, conviction and a large fine.

Other new, heavily punished, offences have been created ranging from 'disorderly conduct' through to 'riot'. The existing offence of 'threatening behaviour' has been widened.

'But I've never been to a protest in my life'

'There's a good chance you'll want to protest in the future..... the way things are going !

Bill Brownhill

"As a cure [for AIDS] I would put 90% of queers in the ruddy gas chamber...We must find a way of stopping these gays going round." - Cllr **Bill Brownhill**, 16 December 1986

"Every one of us here will agree with what has been said." - Cllr **Jack Greenaway**, leader of South Staffs Labour Group

Laying Down the Law

The Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign is working to organise a conference, bringing to together all sections of the lesbian & Gay community, to look at what we want in terms of law reform. The conference is to be held at the Camden Centre in London, on May 23 & 24. One of its aims is to produce a bill for Lesbian & Gay Rights.

There are a huge range of ways in which the law specifically work works against us, lesbians, gays & bisexuals of all ages, as well as not protecting us from discrimination.

The campaign hopes for maximum media coverage in the 'straight' press, of the conference and the demands it will produce. This will be part of the campaign's aim to change attitudes as well as laws.

N US BI BAN

Strong feelings voiced by lesbians prevailed within the National Union of Students at their Lesbian & Gay Conferences in May & December last year.

Their line was that bisexual men are just like straight men, a threat to women & a violation of conference space. They were supported by large numbers of 'right on' gay men, in conferences involving 400 at each. The atmosphere was highly threatening and intimidating to the bisexual men present and to their supporters.

The response from the Warwick group was to seek a compromise that satisfied the angry young women. Their proposal, that there should be a Bi-Liberation movement within the NUS (to work in parallel with the Lesbian & Gay Movement) was accepted. These further splits will not help an already feeble NUS Lesbian & Gay campaign!

GAY PRIDE

This year's Gay Pride March will be from Hyde Park Corner to Jubilee Gardens. The event, which attracted 12000 marchers last year (including a sizable contingent from London Bisexual Group) is set for Saturday 27th June.

The festival at Jubilee Gardens will be free to all, but £30000 is needed to pay for marquees, public ity etc. To this end, a fund-raising scheme,'Friends Of Pride' has been launched. For £10 (send cheque payable to 'Pride 87' to Friends Of Pride,c/o LLGC, 67 Cowcross St. London EC1.) you will recieve regular newsletters and a glossy souvenir programme.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY PACE

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act has been in force for over a year now.

It allows arrests and searches to be made without a warrant.

Included in a range of 'serious arrestable offences', along with treason and murder, is the specifically anti-gay and bisexual offence of 'indecent assault amounting to gross indecency'.

'Suspicion' of the above offence can be used by the police as a way of inflicting severe conditions of arrest on gay males, and increasing powers to stop and search and to set up road blocks.

In the police station, a serious arrestable offence allows up to 24 hours detention without charge, which can be extended to 96 hours with warrants from a magistrate.

In the first 36 hours access to contact with family or friends can be denied.

The act also widens what is permissable for use as evidence in the Courts.

Our rights, such as being told what we are being arrested for are defined in a police code which has no legal significance.

The Act is an attack on our rights which has been made concrete (but flexibly so) by Law.

London
Lesbian & Gay Switchboard
01·837·7324
24 HOUR INFORMATION & ADVICE FOR LESBIANS & GAY MEN

BEREAVEMENT

Jerry Comey is a student working on a project on gay and bisexual breavement.The bereaved may be shunned by their own or lovers family, be forced to cover and act normally, be excluded from mourning rites,or be evicted from a shared home or have to explain absence from work.

Any information would be welcomed. Strict confidentiality would be maintained. Contact Jerry Comey, 52 Lockwood House, Kennington Oval London SE11 5TA.

ROSE FLIEDER

'ROSA FLIEDER',the german gay and lesbian magazine, is hoping to improve international contact by offering to publish personal ads free of charge.If you are looking for a lover or penfriend, or for a place to stay while travelling in Germany etc. send a (typewritten) message to ROSA FLIEDER, Postfach 910 480, D - 8500 Nuernberg 91, W. Germany. Please enclose three international reply coupons (obtainable british G.P.O.).

WOMENS ISSUE

A group of women aim to produce a Women's issue of BI-MONTHLY,that will represent as wide a range of viewpoints as possible. Bi women's voices are rarely heard and any contribution you can make will be greatly welcome, either by articles, pictures, thoughts, poems, comments, short stories or by practical help with editting an producing this issue. We hope that this special issue of BI-MONTHLY will be only the beginning of a much larger involvement of women in the production and content of the magazine.

It would be particularily interesting to hear Bi women's views on the Women's Liberation Movement(whose current ideology on sexuality of course excludes us altogether). Other areas of intere interest might well be the Goddess,religion,spirituality,love sex,feelings about sexual roles in the context of work,family and motherhood, AIDS, political allegiances,or any other subject you care about.

Please send contributions/ offers of help to;
Women's BI-MONTHLY
c/o 111 Courthill Road
Lewisham, London SE13.

RED ROPE

Red Rope is a new group for those who've given up social climbing, and who want to be socialist climbers (well, mountaineers and walkers).

They say their club is lively and active, with groups in Manchester , liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and London, and members strung all over the country.

The trips to mountains, moorland, dales and all open country, are organised collectively, with every one helping with shopping, cooking, washing up, and taking turns to organise trips, lead walks or help novice climbers.

Women form approximately half the membership and organise some women-only weekends.

Children are welcome on all trips and the group has a commitment to shared childcare.

Details of membership are available from Pam Case,2 Archel Rd.London W14 (01 385 6478).

News from Boston USA

STUART OF THE BOSTON GROUP

BI-MONTHLY HAS A TWIN ! BOSTON BISEXUAL MEN'S NETWORK HAVE THEIR OWN NEWSLETTER ('BI-MONTHLY) which now has a circulation of 200. The activities of the group focus around magazine meetings, with frequent weekends camping in the glorious New England countryside.

The magazine can be contacted at BI-MONTHLY,BOX 1645,Cambridge, Massachusetts,02238 U.S.A.

We have recently recieved a letter from Stuart,a former member of the London Bisexual Group, now resident in Boston :

Dear LBG....I have found the Boston Bisexual Men's Network. It's a fairly small group compared to the Women's Network which you've heard so much about. We are moving towards networking more with the Women's group, but respect their seperateness. Like the Women's Network, BBMN puts out a newsletter...The group itself is quite different from the LBG in that it only meets every month. THe newsletter actually does come out monthly. So there are several meetings to do with that . . The group meets on the last Wednesday night of the month usually, in the basement of an old church building where a number of radical groups have their offices. Average attendance is around 20. About 200 men recieve the newsletter, and their are other activities and support groups organised by different people in the network.

In general, the men in the group are pretty aware of men's issues, and our purpose is to further the general struggle for liberation; however, most of this is on the personal level so far, and the network, like the LBG, contains many political views. A lot of the men I've met work in some way or another with computers which is not surprising in this hi-tech area. We do not drink at our meetings, so it's not as easy to loosen up. But when it does happen it seems more natural (as you may know, Americans do not drink nearly as much as you British folk do!)...Stuart.

****

Similarily,the Boston Bi Women's network has a newsletter it's called 'BI-WOMEN' and can be contacted at PO BOX 639,Cambridge Massachusetts,02140 USA.

The following article is extracted fromthat newsletter.

Male pregnancy. Is that music to a woman's ears; or what?

According to this month's Omni magazine, male pregnancy is going to be a real option in only 10 or 20 years. I won't bore you with the biological details, but at last it will be possible for men to enjoy the exquisite experience of giving birth-an experience they have thus far been denied. (Though Groucho once said it was easy enough to imagine: "Just take hold of your lips-now fold them back over your head").

The problem is, that sort of description might make your average male a bit hesitant to take advantage of the pregnancy option. Of course, ultimately we' ll want to convince them to take the leading role in what historically has been called (heh heh) " the miracle of birth". Therefore, in preparation for this big birth-tech breakthrough, let us explain to you men some of the far-reaching benefits pregnancy will offer you.

First of all, it will become your ultimate bargaining chip. We all know the seriousness with which the modern couple divvies up the domestic duties on 50-50 lines I so the marketing, you do the cooking, I do the garbage, you do the fish tank, etc. It will now be possible to really scale up the ante. I would benture that an "I'll do the pregnancy" offer on the part of any man could garner you at least 30 to 40 years of folded socks AND ironed underwear. With no bitching.

Secondly, you've got your cataclysmic mood swings. Pregnancy will offer you a wonderful nine-month opportunity to weep at the drop of a hat, kvetch constantly and have trillions of temper tantrums. (We of course, will do our best not to be too patronizing and blame the whole thing on your hormones).

Speaking of hormones, as a pregnant man, you will have to understand if during this time the wife seems to be considerably more interested in sex than you are. (Beast that she is). Not to worry Just tell her your doctor said it isn't safe. That one has been working for years.

One of the things you will probably enjoy most during your nine months is the chance to gorge without guilt. Remember you are eating for two. Even though one of you is the size of a pinhead and the other of you is rapidly becoming the size of a William (Refrigerator) Perry. Not to worry, the body accommodates all this. Why else do you think God invented stretch marks and varicose veins? Little badges of your biological valor that you can carry with you for life.

Additionally, pregnancy offers you a wonderful chance to believe in Tinkerbell, Santa Claus, all things bright and beautiful again. What we mean by this is you will not once hear the word "pain" mentioned. Nor will you hear the term "excrutiating pain". You will also never hear the words "moaning" or "writhing". Pregnancy will afford you a wondrous journey back into the world of fantasy.

I have saved the best for last. By far, the most lasting benefit you will gain from your pregnancy is humility. Let me assure you there is nothing quite like your basic childbirth position to knock any egotistical notions right out of you. There you'll be - all swabbed and splayed out with only four nurses, a doctor, and anasthesiologist, a resident and 4,000 medical students in attendance. And don't worry. Your wife will be with you too. She'll be the one with the video camera.

Bisexuals and the Aids Crisis

HOW ARE BISEXUAL PEOPLE TO RESPOND TO THE THREAT OF AIDS? OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AIDS CRISIS HAS SPOTLIGHTED THE ROLE OF BISEXUAL MEN AS A 'BRIDGING GROUP'. THAT IS TO SAY, ARE WE SPREADING THE AIDS VIRUS FROM THE HIGH-RISK HOMOSEXUAL GROUP TO THE HETEROSEXUAL POPULATION AS A WHOLE.

The bridging group theory is vaguely plausible, on the face of it, and it seems could be proven in a scientific way. But this places a massive burden of guilt on bisexuals and will destroy our community if we let it It is easy to imagine the consequences: male bisexuality driven underground, women being afraid of starting relationships with bisexual men for fear of catching AIDS.

Firstly, it is imperative to practice safer sex. Many bisexual men have become celibate in the last two years, but quite honestly, isn't this too much to ask of human nature ? Some parts of the gay community have gone to the opposite extreme, fiddling while Rome burns, but most of us will continue to explore our duality.

A very real problem arises if we are not open with our lovers on the question of safer sex. We can all picture the bisexual man who has been living with a woman for some years without telling her of his gay relationships. How does he suddenly insist on the use of condoms, where they have not been used before. An impossible situation, but honesty can be the only answer.

Bisexuals, by organising into groups, can assert that our life is NOT one of contradiction, but one of honesty and openness. One of the most surprising aspects of the AIDS crisis has been the revelation that most gay people engage in bisexual activity at one time or another, and yet bisexuals as a group are barely tolerated in the gay community. This is in some ways a 'stockade' mentality, where everyone outside the gay 'scene' is percieved as the enemy, and bisexuals are seen as traitors to the cause.

There is no doubt that the concept of safer sex requires a considerable grinding of mental gears. The conditioning which judges that a sexual act is meaningless without orgasm is very strong. But there is different way to relate to people sexually. What after all is so good about making sex into a goal- oriented activity when what it is really about is sharing intimacy and affection, rather than merely screwing.

Naturally, it suits Thatcher and the moral reactionaries for us to cut the number and diversity of our sexual partners. Many of us dread a return to the sexual practices of the past. Our parent's generation, before the advent of the pill, were forced to use safer sex techniques to avoid pregnancy. Looked at positively, this could be a marvellous extension of our sexual repertoire. From the viewpoint of mutual masturbation, the feminist sexologist Shere Hite has reported that women find it easier to orgasm from masturbation than from traditional intercourse. Her 1981 report declared that orgasms for men were often much more intense from masturbation, mutual or otherwise, than from intercourse.

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Finally, the gay media campaign is an excellent way of dealing with the oppression of the press. Write in to Fleet Street and ITN, phone them up, make them think about their coverage of the AIDS crisis. It is surprising what can be achieved, if only a sense of personal satisfaction at having registered your protest. As a corollary, if half a dozen gays or bisexuals were to write to their MP, a considerable impression can be made.

In summary, our response to the AIDS crisis must be one of more openness. We must make ourselves aware of safer sex techniques. And we must fight back at media distortion.

TOM BROOKS.

OF COURSE THERE WAS NO PILL WHEN I WAS YOUNG. BUT WE MANAGED
THERE WAS A LOT OF THINGS WE DIDN'T HAVE, NO WASHING MACHINES NO HOOVERS, NO DISHWASHERS,
WE DIDN'T HAVE AIDS
WE DID MOST THINGS BY HAND.

RULES FOR KEEPING THE AIDS KILLER AT BAY

The risk groups include gay or bisexual men, drug takers who use or have used needles,haemophiliacs, prostitutes, people who have spent time in sub - Saharan Africa and anybody who has slept with any of these categories.

Cut down the number of sexual partners.

Avoid anal sex altogether; if you must do it, then use a condom with a water-based lubricant.

Use condoms with a Nonoxynol spermicide for vaginal sex if you are unsure of your partners commitment. Women should continue to use their other contraceptive precautions.

Durex Elite and Nu-form Extra Safe sheaths have built in spermicides with Nonoxynol 9. Spermicides containing Nonoxynol 9 include Delfen foam and cream, Emko foam, Ortho cream, Gynal 2 jelly, Orthoform and Staycept pessaries, and C-film. Spermicides with Nonoxynol 10 or 11 include Duragel, Duracreme, Genexol and Rendells pessaries.

The virus has been found in all bodily fluids: sperm, blood, vaginal fluid, and very tiny amounts in saliva and tears. Menstrual blood of women who are carriers is likely to be infectious.

A Question of Rights

BY MARTIN BURGESS

How often do we hear that the Western countries stand for freedom and democracy, whereas most of the others, particularly the 'Communist' Soviet countries, deny people their human rights. It's the very people who have power over us who tell us we are free!

IN ONE YEAR 37 MEN WERE JAILED FOR HAVING CONSENSUAL SEX WITH MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 16 AND 21. THE AVERAGE SENTANCE WAS 22 MONTHS. THE YEAR WAS 1985, THE COUNTRY ENGLAND.

Many more are jailed for having consensual sex (ie where both partners agree) with males under 16. The punishment these men receive is much more severe than that given to erring heterosexuals for whom the 'age of consent' is 16. The younger lover also faces a form of imprisonment, that is being put into 'care'.

We live in a society in which our freedom to enjoy, express and learn about our lesbian and gay sexuality is severely restricted, especially for young people. Our society does work as a 'democracy' to the extent that the majority can vent their prjudices on minorities.

We are told that Capitalism provides a 'free' and 'fair' system. In reality our system is an oppressive one which relies on greed and competition, and provides a hierachial power strucure in which there are vast numbers of people in poorly paid jobs, millions of unemployed and millions of people without an income of their own (for example children and married women).

A recent attempt to introduce the 'European Bill of Rights' into British law has failed, leaving us in the situation of not even having a constitution defining Rights, which makes it easier for laws to be passed that restrict our freedom. Capitalism supposedly functions with minimal state interference, yet the last few years of Thatcherism have seen a huge increase in police powers, and the involvement of the police on a huge scale in political/industrial disputes. As the Tory policies create more suffering, tension and unrest, her answer has been to increase the powers of the police. Policing tactics and weapons developed in Northern Ireland are increasingly being used here.

This country's laws are extremely moralistic. Many of them date back to Victorian times. Most of them are very open to interpretation, antiquated judges setting precedents with their The legal attack against us ranges from a direct one, where what we do sexually read, write, publish can be criminal offences, through to laws that allow (and therefore support) prejudice in child custody and adoption cases, and in the areas of housing and employment. Young people can be put into 'care' for having a friend who is gay, lesbian or bisexual, on the grounds that they are in 'moral danger'.

The flexibility of the law provides many opportunities for the police (supported by magistrates and judges) to 'get the queers'. You only have to listen to police chiefs, some of whom like James Anderton are self proclaimed prophets speaking on God's behalf, and to ordinary sergeants:

'We have a moral duty to protect children from your ideas',

to realise that the police right the way through are highly moralistic.

They tend to give the investigation of 'sex crime' a very high priority. They often act outside the law in these 'investigations' using standard techniques of intimidation. We suffer the same sort of harrassment and violence at the hands (and the feet) of the police as do blacks and young people.

The discussion of Rights is an important one, as it can raise awarenes of many issues. What Rights do you believe we should have?

Should there be genuine 'freedom of speech' (including the Rights of being able to organise and the Right to protest) in which minority interests get full access to the media, and in which radical views can be heard?

Childrens' Rights to more power over their own lives, to freedom from imprisonment at home and school, to freedom from homophobia, to 'positive images' of homosexuality, to experience lesbian and gay desire, sexuality and sex?

Womens' Rights to freedom from male oppression, to freedom from the child bearing and rearing roles?

Lesbian and Gay Rights in the law and in society as a whole.

The question of rights is an important one which affects us all. How do we define Lesbian and Gay Right Rights? Is there a difference between these and Lesbian and Gay Liberation? (I'd say that Equal Rights, equality with heterosexuals usually implies no liberation at all).

The existance of AIDS has given the 'moral majority' the opportunity to spout 'it's God's vengeance!' The papers have attempted to set a climate in which draconian measures could be taken, eg to close down pubs and clubs, and to introduce compulsory AIDS antibody testing. We must fight against any such moves!

We should not forget the limit to which the erosion of rights can go, when it is not recognised and opposed. Those murdered in Nazi Germany included millions of Jews, gypsies and homosexuals.

It's up to all of us to fight for our rights!

Individual Rights Self Assertion

The concept that we all have certain rights can be a useful one helping in our relationships friendships and helping us take control of our own lives.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS (a suggestion)

- I have the right to be treated with respect as an intelligent, capable and equal human being.
- I have the right to state my own needs & set my priorities as a person (this includes the right to ask for what I want).
- I have the right to say 'Yes' and 'No'
- I have the right to make mistakes without offering excuses.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to decline responsibility for other peoples problems.
- I have the right to say 'I don't understand' and to ask for more information.
- I have the right to relate to others without depending on their approval.

If these are the rights of young people and of women they can be taken as the basis of Women's Liberation & Youth Liberation. As in all 'anarchist' ideas of individual freedom, these rights must be respected as the rights of others, as well as your own.

positive in more ways than O N E

BY 'LUBE'

I naturally thought, no doubt like everybody else that getting the AIDS virus can only happen to other people .....and not to me. Do you think like that?
I went along and asked for the blood test. No sweat. The hospital Clap Departments are masters, the best! as I hope most of you know. Three weeks to wait for the result! No sweat.... no hurry! But I was so confident it couldn't happen to me that I never bothered to go to collect the result and assumed that after no 'come and see me' letter a month and a half later, I was clear. I was confident enough to gleefully tell my friends I hadn't got it. Oddly enough none of them wanted to know whether they 'had it' or not and without exception had an ostrich attitude when I discussed it with them. At that time it was an attitude I neither appreciated nor condoned.

I was so confident it couldn't happen to me

After three months 'the letter' arrived innocently pointing out that I hadn't collected my results. A bit angrily I phoned up asking for confirmation that I hadn't 'got it' but they kept their directive of not saying anything over the phone. (I still disagree with this psychology)

I went to the clinic, answered a few questions & was told the results of the test. So thoughtful they were not to spoil Christmas by writing sooner.

Being a practical and even character I just had a surprised reaction without any shock or particular feelings. I got the tube home, no unusual feelings, ...but when I got home! Then it hit me after a couple of scotches. Quite uncharacteristically I cried a little to myself. Crikey! I just didn't want to be alone that evening. Shock is SHOCK I guess.

The foremost thing on my mind that evening was the welfare of a girlfriend I screwed around with for 10 months which ended about a year and a half ago. Christ! had I given it to her and has she given it to her current boyfriend? Her 3 kids and all wouldn't be too chuffed with me either!
I phoned my closest friends and my ex-girlfriend. I had a really hot bath. Later my closest friend came 'round and we got through half a litre of Scotch. That helped. The next three days were those excessively cold days in January, and I was also starting with a nasty bronchial cough.
Have I got Bronchial pneumonia! ....and that sweating in the night.. every night..... is it significant, or is it just the cough medicine? Wearing two scarves and 2 jackets + jersey isn't my style! My health is historically well above average and sound. Is this the beginning of the end?

Fortunately, time is a great healer and now 2 weeks later I hardly think about it; but I suppose I subconciously already accept I might only have another 1 to 5 years left. I'm very strong and a fighter and a surviver though; so maybe my will-power is strong enough (if that has any effect). I'm certainly experiencing a revitalising aspect to my life. My ambitions, though they were considerable enough have increased & I'm now resuing even more important activities within my business and profession, just in case I really don't have that much time. Life really is becoming worth living!

I feel that death from AIDS isn't all that unusual or fearsome for most that do or will die from it. Putting things in perspective my mother died of pneumonia when I was three, thousands more die from cancer and heart attacks and

strokes, many more thousands are killed by cars, aeroplanes, by the hand of other people and all sorts of diseases, millions more from famine, drought, wars. So what the hell. Gotta go somehow !

But anyhow, a few closing words of advice. Live for the present. Find that 'lover for the rest of your life', and, finally, don't bother to take a blood test until a cure is found.

Instead, safe sex really is the answer...these guys are giving the best advice after all! And, finally, look after your health and make the most of life (just in case you got it!)

PROSTITUTION

AN INTERVIEW BY MARTIN BURGESS

Claudio is 23, living, working and studying in England. I interviewed him about his experiences as a rent boy in Hamburg, Germany, about which he talked with enthusiasm and much humour.

q. How old were you when you first started, and what sort of situation was it that led you to start?

I think there were various reasons why I started prostitution, and how old was I? I think I was about 19 I'd say. One of the not that young rent boys. And I was living in Hamburg, and I was on the dole. I was quite bored, I had the urge to do something, because most of my friends were involved in art, or working. Not proper art, just sitting in front of the typewriter and doing something. At least they wewre doing something, they were producing something. They could identify themselves with being a writer, or whatever. But there was nothing for me which I had, which I could identify with, which was I suppose quite a lack.

q Were you desperate for money at the time?

Not at all! I had my dole which wasn't much, more or less the same as in England I suppose, maybe a bit more. I knew two or three friends who were rent boys sometimes, very occasionally, not mainly because of money, some of them just because they were bored, or yes why not, having another 50 marks. And I knew two or three girls who were prostitutes as well, but they were really prostitutes, they were on the game about five days a week. So I had a lot of people who gave me an insight into prostitution, and that it doesn't have to be like it's presented in the media. Also I was interested in the hustlers themselves, in what they are like, because I am always intersted in outside groups.

I would say about 50% or maybe even more of the boys were Turkish boys and they were of about the age of 15 up to 17 maybe. I don't know whether I should count myself as a German boy or a Turkish boy. My father came from Iraq, you know. Anyway the German boys were about 4 years older at least, and some of them were about 23, 24, 25 maybe. They were quite separated, the German boys and the Turkish boys.

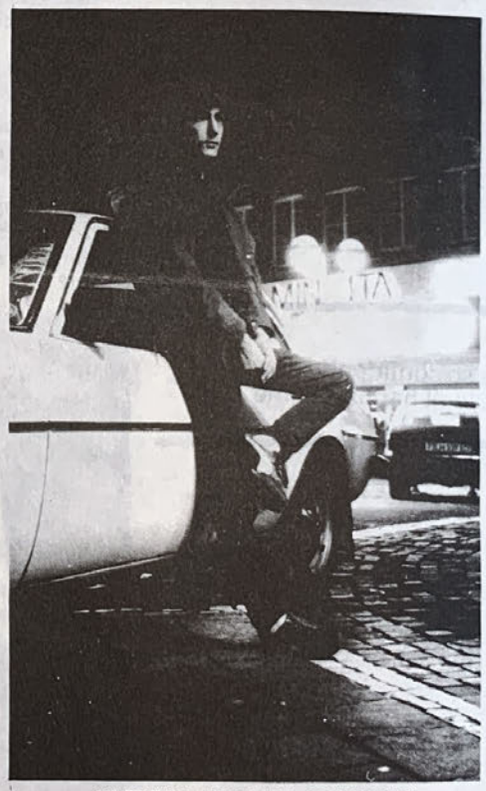
The Turkish boys from what I can gather their main reason was money. For some of them or maybe for most of them, it was very important that they wouldn't suck a punter, and that they wouldn't get fucked by a punter. They would maybe wank the punter, allow him to suck them, but as soon as it comes to them to suck the punter, you know, at least in their discussions they deny it.

q So it covers attitudes of what is a male and a female.

The male who gets fucked is a homosexual, the other one is straight. It's very important for the Turkish boys.

q What were the punters like?

Very, very different. I mean I never would have thought that it would be so varied. First of all the age, from 20 up to up to 40 or 50.



WAITING FOR THE CUSTOMERS

q Yes, the image is very much of the dirty old man, with a young boy.

Not at all, you know most of the people were older than 35, not very much older. I mean that's not old. There were really some young attractive looking boys, really play boys, with their BMW, and you usually just thought, 'Why the hell is he coming to us, to the station?'

The thing is you go to the station, I was always there at about eight o'clock or nine o'clock, and then you have to wear quite good clothes, not too good because its a

Claudio on the Game in Hamburg

station, but not too bad either (laugh). You just hang around there, presented, and most of them have got a car, and you see them always making this circle, looking.

When I went on the game the first time, I didn't know at all what are the prices, what you are supposed to do, whether my clothes are alright. So I just went to the next hustler and asked him, and they were so helpful, really. They were really concerned about me, told me everything, what the prices were, what you were supposed to do. They taught me, 'Be careful there's one punter who doesn't pay, one punter who's a bit like a maniac, he's got a red BMW', really really helpful.

q What would happen at the station?

You stay there and you just wait, you wait until a car stops, you can gather from the expression of the face that he's intersted either in you, or in someone else. There weren't that many hustlers, on average four or five, which isn't very many, and sometimes this one went up first, sometimes the other one. I didn't want to be too pushy. I went to the car, looked at his face, waited for a reaction. If he looked me in the face then I would ask him for a cigarette, then usually, he is going to open the door, and then you are talking a bit, about everything, about music, about yourself, sometimes I was lieing, sometimes I was making up stories like me being a painter, a musician, or whatever.

q Did you find that fun doing that?

Yeah, I found it really funny, though sometimes I got really puzzled, I made up so many lies that after one hour I was really confused, so that I was contradicting myself. Anyway, it didn't matter at all, you know, because that's a one night stand, and of course the punter don't mind. I wouldn't think that he minds at all. I think that he thinks that they all lie anyway. About my age for instance. That was funny, I was 19, I told them I was 18, and they were always trying to make me younger. 'Oh you can tell me the truth, you are 16,' I mean I looked a bit young, but I think not that young.

q Imagining you were younger, that turned them on more?

Yeah, I mean that was really funny. It happened to me dozens of times. 'Come on you are 16 aren't you!' And I would say 'No, no' and after a while I would say 'Yes, yes', and it was really important to them.

q What would happen next?

Sometimes you talked five words, and would go straight into action, and sometimes you would talk half an hour. Mostly you would first of all try to avoid the real subject. What do you want me to do and how much money is it going to be?

There are three options if the punter wants you. One of the options is that you go to a deserted park place. The other option is that you go into his house, and the third option, but very rare, was a hotel. And this hotel thing just happened to me about three or four times, not more, unfortunately, most of the time, I think it was more or less the same: park place and home, going back to their home. Home, of course I was a bit scared of going to a home.

q So what would you say if anything you got out of it apart from breaking the boredom, more specifically what things did you gain?

Apart from money?

q Yeah, apart from money.

It's very difficult. I thought a lot about it. I saw programmes on television about prostitutes, male prostitutes, and sometimes I was a bit angry about the attitudes of these ex-prostitutes. Most of them are really regretting their past. 'If I wouldn't have done it, now I'm on the right path, and I could have done so much more if I wouldn't have been on the game', and really pitiful. Like one of them was going to school, I think he wasn't able to see that, if he would have continued school without all this stuff, I think he was running away as well, on the game and so on, I don't know whether he could have enjoyed the school as much as does now, because he's done it on account of his own will. He's decided 'I wanna go to school', whereas the vast majority is forced to go into school, and no wonder after a while they just get fed up with it.

I had so many discussions with one friend, who in other perspectives was really open minded, who asked me, 'My God, how the hell can you sell your body?'

q Prostitution seems to raise prejudices.

Entirely unable to understand this. To people who said, 'Oh god, what is he doing, he's selling his body, he's selling himself', I just went 'My God, you fucking bastard, you're going to a factory to earn your money, you're selling your hands. You go eight hours into the factory, I go

half an hour into the bed, and I enjoy the bed sometimes much more than being in the factory.'

q Yeah, this is one of the things, people argue that this is exploitation. I'd say any job is exploitaion really. You're selling your time.

Your hands, your brain.

And you of course you have got power as a hustler, not only in bed, I mean even if you talk with him you can chose it, and sometimes it's really enjoyable, sometimes it's not enjoyable. But there were times .... for instance I had a girlfriend when I was on the game, and she wouldn't really, I don't want to say 'she wouldn't really let me'. (laughter) Somehow I think we had sexual problems. Anyway it was quite confusing. So sometimes I was with her, and I was really randy, but there wasn't any option for both of us to enjoy the sex, so after this sometimes, not very often, after such incidences I just went to the game to get rid of all this fucking tension, and I got 50 marks on top of it.

And what I want to say is, in this example it was such a night. I went really like a maniac to the station, and I was lucky, after five minutes, a big car, a living mobile. He was sucking me off. I got about 70 Marks, which is quite good, and he just sucked me off. I went there and had sex with him, but my mind wasn't actually with him, I was just confining myself on my sexuality and on my orgasm, on my feeling, just on myself. You know, I wasn't attracted by him. I wasn't having sex with him, I was having sex with myself. Most of the time when I was having sex with the punters, and I have to be honest, I just confined myself, on myself, and that's it, you know. So it wasn't actually active sex from both of the partners, and most of the time indeed I just was wanked off or sucked off.

'I WAS HAVING SEX WITH MYSELF'

q Did you have to fantasise about other things at the time?

No I didn't, wait, wait... a couple of times I had to, but there were other times when I had a hard on even before I was in the car, and I couldn't understand why the hell, 'there's a man and hes not even attractive, you're not really a gay, you're bisexual, much more heterosexual, and you sit here with a hard on, before you are even in the car'. It was never a problem for me to get a hard on, never. There were some hustlers who really had a problem with it, because of course if you can't get a hard on, you don't get any fucking money at all. (laughter).

'IT WAS NEVER A PROBLEM TO GET A HARD ON'

q Would you say this was part of the coming out of your gay side?

That's very difficult to say. Before I was on the game I had some problems about talking about my sexuality.

q So it helped you break down a lot of taboos about sex.

Yeah, certainly. I think so, really.

q Did you ever get any trouble from the police?

None at all. I was really scared sometimes, but none at all, even the Turkish guys who were obviously under 18, didn't get any trouble as far as I know. In Germany the age of consent is 18, but the Turkish guys were obviously 16, some of them 15. There was a police station about twenty yards from it. On the same street was a police station, but they couldn't care less I think. They didn't hassle us at all.

q What sort of amounts did you earn and what did you have to do to earn the money?

Various, various, various. I tried not to go under 40 marks. The average was 50, 60 marks, and I didn't have to do that much for it, mainly wanking, getting wanked, and getting sucked, and cuddling. It was done in about, the whole thing from meeting him to, depends on where he lived, not more than an hour sometimes half an hour. There were quite a few times where I earned a 100 marks, and the whole job was done in 20 minutes. And a 100 marks is really quite good.

There was one guy who without a car who asked me to go with him, just around the corner, there was a hedge. I had to wear all my clothes, I had to wear tight jeans. I just would have to lean against the wall. He would unzip his fly, and he would fuck me, but with my clothes on, you know, and he would grab my penis under my jeans. It was a really nice job. It was done in ten minutes, and 50 marks. This I really enjoyed, to be honest.

q Did it ever happen that you didn't think that the man got that much sexual pleasure from it, at the time?

To be honest I didn't care that much about it, I suppose, not really. It didn't happen once that someone was really complaining. Yeah, once the first time it happend, this was really weird.

The first time I was doing it on my own, I went to the station and a guy wanted me for about 30 marks, and I just told him 'No way!', but I was scared, it was the first time, so he was going on dealing with me about the price for about one hour, and afterwards we came to the agreement, I'm going to be with him one hour, in his bed actually, which is quite a long time, for about a 100 marks, which is not too bad. Went home with him, talked a bit, then he put the 100 mark note on the table. We were in bed for one hour, and he came at least once, maybe twice, he turned on the light. I looked on his watch, one hour was gone. He turns the light out with the comment that we have another half an hour left. (laughter)

He realised that I was a greenhorn, because I was scared and it took me a while to get into bed, in the first two months it was always difficult to get the clothes off, and of course he realised all this and he tried to take advantage of me, by keeping me longer than we'd agreed, or even by not paying me. I told him 'No, I'm not that stupid, I suppose', I put on my clothes. He was in his underpants, I had everything on, I took the 100 mark note, and then 'Alright boy, we've gotta talk', like this, and I thought 'OK we have to be careful'. I just thought that he wouldn't really let me go, so I pretended I would talk to him to distract his attention. I went to him very very slowly like I was going to sit beside him and talk to him. Then I just, you know, shot out, and he was following me with his underpants (laughter). This is not a joke! Through the staircase, this not a joke, really. And I was so fucking scared, scared to death.

You know I went out of there like a bat out of hell, and got the next taxi. I mean he actually followed me in his underpants down the staircase. This was my first experience, but afterwards I was so proud, I was just showing off with this story.

q Did you ever feel used?

No I didn't feel used. I felt that I'm using them sometimes , and I had the power, and I'm a bit strange anyway, and I don't think I'm a good representative of the majority of hustlers. I don't think so at all.

Guess what the worst for me would have been. If I was standing there and nobody looked at me. That was the worst they could do , not looking at me and not taking me, that was really the worst, not becuase of the money, it was something definite.

q So feeling desired was important.

It was fucking important to me, maybe I'm a bit conceited, you know. So this was really important, and if they took me you know I felt power over them.

'I THOUGHT O.K. WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL'

THE CASE FOR ROMANCE

I've enjoyed reading Bi-monthly for over a year now and the editor and all the contributors are to be congratulated for the very professional quality of the magazine and the important role it continues to play in reaching out to isolated bisexual people across the country. My only criticism is one that I know has been made before and has admittedly been partly met by the 'First Person' se tion; that is there still seems to be too much intellectualizing and not enough feeling coming out from the pages. I appreciate that there are a large number of issues that should be and have been covered and that the 'politics'of bisexuality cannot be denied, but can I please put in a word for those all too easily forgotten areas of love and romance?

Perhaps Bi-monthly eds are worried about lowering the quality of the writing and the poignancy of the 'social comment' in the magazine if too much heterosexual-associated slush is included or maybe we're all just too afraid of clichés and self revelations to express our real feelings in permanent print. Romance is often dismissed as old-fashioned and sentimental but I for one at twenty-one years young am still a sucker for it! Coming out as bisexual to all my friends and family would not have been possible for me had I not loved this one woman so much that I would genuinely have risked every one else's rejection and wanted to defy the whole world and whoever controls it up there to tell me what I was feeling was wrong.

UNADULTERATED LUST

What people are all to ready to forget is that when many of us stand up and shout about our sexuality or wear ourbadge with pride we are not arrogantly thrusting our sexual orientations down strangers' throats as we are sometimes accused but simply making a statement of love and a plea for acceptance of that love. Don't get me wrong, I'm not pretending that bisexuality is allabout love; let's not be coy about admitting a little unadulterated lust for both sexes - but as one gay man put it "everyone always assumes it all happens below the waist when really it's often nearer the heart."

When I talk about 'romance' I don't just mean sexual affairs either - does anybody else out there enjoy romantic friendships

-or platonic passion?! My room is full of little notes and poems, feathers and leaves, candles and fircones, old photos and flowers given to me by people for whom I care a lot. You may call that some kind of collection mania or nature fetish but I call it romance - isn't love expressed in many more subtle and less transient ways than sex? Two ex-lovers of mine could probably wallpaper their rooms with the unbirthday cards I have sent them - almost every day is a celebration, anniversary, mourning or memory of some part of love. One of the most liberating parts of discovering my bisexuality was the ultimate realization of the extent of physical intimacy and emotional intensity possible with someone of the same sex. In discarding the conformist and horribly inhibiting accepted norms of frendship and sexual love all my relationships with people are somehow deeper and richer. Have you noticed how much more openly physical and demonstratively affectionate gay and bisexual men and women often are? - though maybe that's unfair as my non-homophobic straight friends are also very huggy people; it's very appropriate that the heterosexuals unafraid of gays group should be called HUG.

BISEXUAL DILEMMA

It's not all a bed of roses though. Romantic friendship is all very well if you are both agreed what that means exactly. The main bisexual dilemma for me is treading the tightrope of uncertainty as to where the fine divide between friend and lover really is. Sleeping with a friend can be really special but sometimes confusing and frustrating if for one the intimacy tumbles into arousal whilst the other is just snuggling up to keep warm. Maybe that's why there seems to be quite a taboo about sharing a bed with someone who isn't your lover; there is always an assumption that bed is about orgasms not cuddles.

ORGASMS NOT CUDDLES?

Finding out about my lesbian 'half' is both exciting and a little frightening. On the one hand it brings me closer to women and also somehow more relaxed with men; on the other hand it adds a whole new complicated dimension to my relationships with female friends-particularly of course when I know they are gay or bisexual - as the barriers to what you can and cannot do not to mention what you feel like doing to express your closeness are forever uncertain and redefining themselves.

Widening your choice of availables crudely speaking is all very well but being comparitively spoilt for choice hasn't unfortunately prevented me from occasionally feeling attracted to the two groups which aren't actually available - gay men and heterosexual women! and anyway (to use an analogy) I know I prefer being vegetarian because my indecision when the menu is put before me is greatly reduced by knowing exactly what I don't want! It is worth remembering what a profound impact being bisexual or rather being ever aware that you are, can have on the way you relate to people generally..... or is it just me?

In enjoying the freedom of an individual and non-conformist identity every one of us has to surely make our own decisions about the definitions and limits (now who's intellectualizing?!) of our friendships and love affairs and how much of ourselves we are able and willing to give to any one (or more?) special person. In any case let none of us be too self-conscious and political, journalistic and trendy to forget the very real magic of romance.... again open to your own definition, but much more than red roses and Milk Tray for me.

Sally Knocker.

NEGATIVE IMAGES

Reading the Halsbury Debate

BY PHILIP GATTER

".....but I can locate a specific mischief and begin there...with one of the worst mischiefs corrupting the fibre of our children and ultimately of our society itself".

So spoke the Earl of Halsbury on homosexuality, opening the second reading of his Bill. The purpose of the Bill was to prevent "a local authority from giving financial or other assistance to any person for the purpose of publishing or promoting homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship or for the purpose of teaching such acceptability in any maintained school".

The discussion which followed, at times farcical, at others depressing, reflected a misunderstanding of the intentions of positive image campaigns by local authorities, "councils which are propagating homosexuality" (Fitt), which in turn rested on prejudiced misconceptions of homosexuality. Reading the Hansard report, it is clear that the occasional forays into reasonable argument fall to the wayside of moral bigotry, and the lasting impression is of three monkeys sitting in a row, with their hands over various orifices.

To give an overview, a typical statement of the prejudicial fears expressed would be:
"We must not allow this cult of homosexuality, making it equal with heterosexuality, to develop in our land. We must preserve our moral and spiritual values which have come down through the centuries." (Denning).
In other words, positive images will make people into homosexuals, who are inimical to The British Way of Life (whatever that may be).

To be fair, some documentary evidence is given for a proselytizing element in certain positive image campaigns. However, this is quoted only from a few Gay sources (not Local Authorities), such as the Lesbian and Gay Youth Magazine and the Gay Liberation Front Manifesto. Are these representative of the views of most Lesbians and Gay men? Furthermore, there is little discussion from which to develop an imformed view; their lordships seemed disinclined to examine the evidence for their case:
"I am bound to say, having studied some of this propaganda that I agree with the noble Earl that it is shocking and is not really suitable for the delicate ears of your lordships" (Longford).

So, discounting the activities of some radical groups, what else produces the conclusion that education produces sexuality? A low rumbling is heard, and the nature-nurture debate, in its most simplistic form, is trundled out by Lord Kilbracken. Are homosexuals born or made? Kilbracken is of the latter opinion, and knows this from experience, though his explanation is a little coy:
"My belief is strongly supported by my own personal experiences at Eton in the 1930s, and into which I have no intention of going".
My belief is that the debate is as far from resolution as it ever was and that, anyway, the very opposition of nature to nurture is an artefact. In much of our thinking we force a separation between what is biologically given (natural), and what is socially imposed (cultural). This is just a way of looking at things. It is not a distinction which can be verified in a scientific sense, especially with regard to human sexuality. We don't even know if it is legitimate to speak of "causes" of sexuality; at least generalizations are potentially dangerous.

To return to our august company, even if homoseuals are made, why is this bad? Sadly, the answers are mostly pure prejudice. I won't quote references to Christian morality as they are many and tediously predictable. But if homosexuality isn't ungodly, it is at least unfortunate:

"It seems to me that in society today, when we spend a great deal of money and time trying to prevent physical and mental disability, in some of our schools they are promoting sexual disability. There is no doubt in my mind that homosexuals and lesbians are disabled sexually. It has nothing to do with their physical ability but is to do with the whole aspect of sex" (Swinfen).

Hold on , this looks interesting, I'd like to know more about this "whole aspect of sex". Please explain! But no, back we go to the destruction of Christianity, the family, civilization, etc.

Wilde – Having it Both Ways?

On similar lines, is Lord Campbell of Alloway to be thanked for his sympathy? Of the Bill he says:
"It is not designed to harass or humiliate homosexuals. They are often sad and lonely people unable to form stable relationships, and they are, I am sure all your lordships will agree, worty of compassion".

Now doesn't that suggest a question? Lord Kilbracken, why not ask Lord Campbell, are homosexuals born sad and lonely and unable to form stable relationships, or are they made that way by the society they live in? But of course, that would require tiresome thoughtfulness.

As bisexual readers, you may be curious to know if bisexuality gets a mention. Yes and no. It appears as an interesting concept which fits well with their lordships' general model of sexuality (which is like painting by numbers with only one colour- green). The word bisexual, though, is never mentioned. Lord Halsbury seems to envision a linear scale of deepening iniquity, with Gay men firmly at the bottom; lesbians higher up:

"I was referring to male homosexuals. I did not think then that lesbians were a problem. They do not molest little girls. They do not indulge in disgusting and unnatural practices like buggery. They are not wildly promiscuous and do not spread venereal disease".
(Lesbians are slipping though, as Halsbury has been warned that "the loony left is hardening up the lesbian camp").

Somewhere between these two poles comes a different category of people:
"Homosexuals, in my submission, are handicapped people. Of course some of them do not confine themselves to relations with their own sex. I suppose Oscar Wilde is one of the most famous examples. I am not referring to those who attempt to have it both ways, but I am talking of those whose tendency is so strong that they can have relationships only with their own sex (Longford).

So there you are. If you're bisexual you're not completely abominable, so feel complimented (I'm assuming that the above in some perverse way is a reference to bisexuality). You might even turn out alright if you give up your disgusting practices and stick to the nice ones!

In closing, perhaps I should give Lord Halsbury the last word. The words missed from my opening quotation were:
"I cannot put theworld to rights singlehanded.....".
I admit defeat. There is little to fault in that statement.

PHILIP GATTER

(Quotations from 'House of Lords Official Report,'Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill, 18th December, 1986)..

London's Gay Community Bookshop
Gay's The Word
66 Marchmont Street WC1,,
Telephone: 01-278 7654

LETTERS

So that's what they look like!?

"A second undercover officer, PC Jack Jones said he had attended Mrs Payne's parties dressed as a bisexual, with a silk cravat, eye makeup and gold glasses on a chain."

The Guardian, 27.1.87

DIRECTORY OF BISEXUAL ACTIVISTS,C/O THE BASEMENT,69 ELM GROVE BRIGHTON

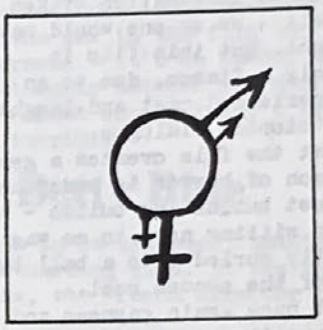
Dear Friends,

We are compiling a directory of bisexual activists as a resource for each other and a system of support. The list would be available to anyone interested.

We hope as many as possible will feel able to have an entry in such a directory, ideally with a list of their previous involvements and present interests. We can help you write these if you like.

An example of such an entry might be - "Ben", Pink Dandelion, The Basement, 69 Elm Grove, Brighton BN2 3ET. Was very involved in Student Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement, produced "Against Patriarchy" magazine in 1984, co-founder of Brighton Bisexual Group, founding member of Off-Pink Publishing group,one of the founder members and present co-ordinator of the Radical Lesbian and Gay Identified Bisexual Network. Present Convenor of Brighton Polytechnic Sexuality Group. Member of LGYM. Co-Co-ordinator of the Bisexual Activists' Directory. Available for talks on any aspect of sexual politics. Also willing to write articles, plays, powms to order. Will do word processing of bisexual material, given enouth notice. Also into pacifism, veganism, quakerism, anarchism, cycles (biorhythms?) and motorcycles, travel and philosophy.

Please let us know if you are willing to become part of the directory. (Enclose an s.a.e. with your entry if you would like a copy of the directory). The first edition will be published in July.



MANCHESTER BISEXUAL GROUP.

Dear London Bisexual Group,

On the 2nd of February the Gay Men's Subcommittee of Manchester City Council agreed to fund the Bisexual Group with £200 as a starter grant. This decision was made after several months soul searching.

They had been geting a lot of bad publicity from a regular columnist from the Manchester Evening News who had been trying to equate support for a Bisexual Group with the spread of AIDS.

A further complication was the attitude of some members of the Gay Men's Sub-committee towards bisexuals and bisexuality on the grounds of their own political leanings.

The application still has to go through the Lesbian Sub-committee. However, as the Bisexual Group was started for men (or at least we said this in our application) we do not envisage any opposition from the Lesbian Sub-committee on the grounds of there being no such thing as bisexual women!!

As yet we do not see the group as being a mixed group because we have only had bisexual men contacting us up to now and if women do contact us they would probably be put off by an all male group (catch 22!). Unless of course we came into contact with a woman who was prepared to stick it out and stay in the group and try to do some recruitment of other women members.

We are short of ideas and would very much appreciate any thoughts, suggestions, correspondence and support you could give us in getting established a group with a long term future in Manchester,

Yours faithfully,

MBG.
P.O. Box 153,
Manchester,
M60 1LP.

Gothic

The story of the writing of Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' is fascinating, involving as it does both Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ideal material for the grotesque imagination of Ken Russell - or so one would have thought. But this film is largely a fiasco, due to an inexperienced cast and laughably bad 'biopic' dialogue.

That the film creates a genuine frisson of horror is undeniable. I It just builds and builds - the woman sitting next to me was practically curled into a ball by the end of the second reel.

But once again gayness and bisexuality are depicted as facets of sick, perverse and depraved personalities, as forms of sexuality inextricably mingled with images of masochism,neurosis and fear.

Not that one cannot enjoy the beauty of Julian Sands as Shelley, clambering naked onto the foof of Byron's house in Geneva to worship the elemental forces of lightning and thunder.

Thomas Dolby's pounding score is bearable, but dated as the vision of Russell is dated, reminding this viewer constantly of the opulence of 1960s Dulux paint ads - the wind sweeping remorselessly through net curtains.... TJB.

NATASHA RICHARDSON IN 'GOTHIC'

NEW FILMS

DAVID BURKLE TAKES A LOOK AT SOME NEW FILMS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST FROM A BISEXUAL STANDPOINT.

The Film Year in Britain can be reckoned to start with the London Film Festival. Out of some 150 films shown at the November 86 Festival, at least 10 had themes which embraced non-heterosexual themes and relationships. Excluding 'Blunt' (shown on Channel 4 in January) the first of these are just reaching the screen now.

They may not be the gay classics that emerged from the 85 Festival (My Beautiful Laundrette, Desert Hearts,Kiss of the Spider-woman) and the four I managed to see - tickets being in short supply - will have less box office appeal anyway, being subtitled foreign language films, but they looked at broader aspects of the homosexual experience in personal and cultural terms. Though less 'affirming' from a lesbian and gay point of view, they are certainly stimulating and provocative from the bisexual angle. None of them give any cognisance to the fact that they were born, if not conceived, in the age of safer sex.

TENUE DE SOIREE

TENUE DE SOIREE (Virgin,from 22 May), a highly anarchic black comedy is so full of action, its only when it's over that you have time to examine its credentials in terms of gay politics. Monique (Miou Miou) is accustomed to giving her doting and submissive husband Antoine (Michel Blanc) a heavy time. Unhappy with their small and boring lives, she gets more than she bargains for when Bob (Gerard Depardieu) explodes onto the scene. He's a man with some very effective ideas for relieving the wealthy of their assets and a resolute determination to bed Antoine.

Antoine is initially reluctant; butMonique, hooked on their newly affluent lifestyle encourages him: 'He is our friend. You can't wreck all that by being overly touchy!' But Bob has other things in mind for her...It's a subversive, surprising and sexually uninhibited film with great pace, though the director, Bernard Blier,admits to not knowing how to end it and it shows. Afterwards in the cold light of day, considering boththe portrayal of homosexuality and the men's treatment of the woman - even taking in to account what a bitch she had been - I wondered whether I should have been laughing quite so enthusiastically.

ESCALIER C

ESCALIER 'C' (Cannon) focusses on the interaction of a varied and colourful group of individuals who live on and in the rooms off staircase C in a Paris tenement block, The principal character, Forster Lafont (Robin Renucci) is an art critic, a shit of the first water;'I like beauty,I like brains, you don't qualify' is his opening remark to Florence (Catherine Lepriure). What is it

that attracts her and the gay man on the top floor - one of the most sympathetic characters in the film (played by Jacques Bonaffe) - to this apparently insensitive and arrogant man. The film convincingly captures the mix of comedy and tragedy in these peoples' lives as under the influence of the latter Forster mellows and becomes something of a reformed character ? is it inevitable that he becomes less interesting too? Whilst illustrating the ultimate loneliness of the human condition, it is infused throughout with delightful warmth and wit.

Man of Ashes

Another two films deserving wider viewing, but still looking for distributors in this country, are MAN OF ASHES and DONNA HERLINDA AND HER SON. These are significant in Tunisian and Mexican cinema respectively, as they mark the emergence of gay/bisexual issues in strongly 'machismo' societies.

In an interview after the screening of Man Of Ashes, the producer (Ahmed Attia) said 'It's a film about child abuse, not about homosexuality, neither boy is really homosexual' and Nouri Bouzid (the director) has said 'male power is a powerful concept in our society, I reckoned the worst thing that could happen to a boy would be to lose that power.'

These of course are matters of opinion, as is the point at which we become 'really homosexual', and Arab opinion is likely to differ from European opinion. These boys feel different - and it's not difficult to imagine they would have felt different well before they were sexually assaulted (at the age of twelve) - Hachemi is blond and has such white skin he should have been a girl, and Farfat is thin lanky and awkward, not a typical Arab.

The pressure to shed their childhood and conform is exacerbated by the conflict between the old cultural values of their society and the influences of encroaching westernization.

Homosexuality and child abuse are bold issues for film makers to take on in the Arab world, but even more controversial in Attia's view is the films sympathetic portrayal of a Jew, Levy, and this old man's relationship with the young Hachemi.

The pace of the film varies considerably. Long shots of Hachemi languid and troubled, pondering his sexuality and what to do about his impending marriage may drag a little, but capture his uncertainty. None the less he is compellingly watchable. We are led to believe that he resolved his dilemma by the end of the film, but I was not convinced: 'Even when burned to ashes a little always remains'. An added bonus for non-Arabs is the films facinating insight into everyday Arab life.

Dona Herlinda

Compared with that film's realism and ambiguity Dona Herlinda and Her Son is at the same time subversive tale. We learn nothing of Mexican life except that in upper class society appearances must be kept up. Some might see this film adaptation of Lopez Paez short story as the perfect fantasy for a bisexual male.

Dona Herlinda (Guadalupe del Toro glides through life enigmatic and etherial, presiding over the lives of her young surgeon son Rudolfo (Marco Antonio Trevino) & his gay lover, music student Ramon (Artoro Meza) with a benign omnipresence. Apparantly unaware of their relationship, but totally accepting of it, she invites Ramon to live in their house. She also finds Olga (Leticia Lupercio) an aware and sympathetic feminist of their class who values her own independance, simulataneously providing a wife for Rodolfo, an ally for Ramon and female companionship for herself. They all live together in what soon becomes a happy menage a cinq! None of the cast have acted in a feature film before and they are all quite delightful. A charming film, though challenging too. Apparantly the 'real shocker' in Mexico, according to director Jaime Humberto Hermosillo), though so discretely shot the uninformed may miss it, is the fact that at the beginning Rodolfo won't allow Ramon to fuck him - it's only after he's proved his masculinity through his marriage that he wants this to happen. Hermosillo also says 'the most disturbing thing about the film to some of the macho audience in Mexico has not been the sex in the film but the tenderness - it's so tender the relationship between the men, and some cannot accept that. I think it's terrible.'

Betty Blue

This is an extremely beautiful and absorbing film. It was made by Beneix, the French director of Diva.

Betty Blue tells the story of the wild love affair of Zorg, a bum who repairs cars, and Betty, a ravishing beauty with bee stung lips. In clearing out his shack, she discovers that Zorg has written a novel, and determines to get it published. By sheer will power she succeeds in this, and they settle down to run a piano shop in a quiet village.

But Betty is restless; they both drink too much. Gradually her behaviour becomes deranged.

On the face of it, this is a sexist film - Betty is presented as rather excessively pretty and feminine, the 'little woman', Zorg stolid and reliable. But the implication of the film is that Betty goes mad partly because of the falseness of the roles they play - if only she were not trapped in femininity and devotion to being 'in love', if only Zorg was not trApped by masculinity...

ROBIN RENUCCI & JACQUES BONAFFE
IN 'ESCALIER C'

Boy's Own Stories

BY MARTIN BURGESS.

'Teardrops on My Drum' by Jack Robinson (Gay Men's Press £3.95).

'Street Lavender' by Chris Hunt (Gay Men's Press £4.95).

'Saul's Book' by Paul T. Rogers (Abacus £3.95).

Among the outpouring from gay publishers nowadays, there's an increasing number of books which include positive descriptions of relationships between men and boys.

Is it that the publishers realise that there's a commercial market for such themes, or is it that publishing is expanding to take account of a wider range of experiences in the real world?

'Teardrops on my drum' by Jack Robinson is allegedly an autobiography. Although the description of Liverpool in the 1920's is convincing, the book really reads like an escapist fantasy.

At the age of 11 Jack has a 'smiling, friendly-looking man' sit next to him in the cinema. He responds to the man's advances.

The man, Eddy, is a policeman, who helps provide food, clothes, warmth and affection for the boy.

The book traces Jack's life up to the age of 14, when he joins the army as a boy soldier. The events described in greatest detail are the sexual ones, in which area Jack seems to have a lot of luck.

For the boys described, sex is a natural way of expressing love, or they do what they feel is nice, remarkably free of guilt or adverse reaction from others.

Were the twenties really so liberated?

There's a touch more realism to the plot and narration of 'Street Lavender' by Chris Hunt.

Willie Smith grows up in the severe poverty of East London in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. He is initiated sexually by his brother Charley, four years older, 'strong and tough', with whom he shares a bed and loves deeply.

At the age of 12 their ma dies, Charley goes off to sea, and Willie is adopted by rich relatives, where he receives a 'decent education', until something happens which throws him back into the gutter.

He learns to use his youth and beauty as a means of earning a living, and experiences life as a rent-boy walking the streets, then later life in an upper class brothel.

Chris Hunt tackles many issues, the thin veneer of Victorian morality is scraped away to reveal the ugliness underneath. Clear political comments are made, very relevant to English society today, but above all the book is a good read, with it's touches of humour, portrayal of emotions (including love and infatuation) and it's captivating story line.

'Saul's Book' by Paul T. Rogers is set in present day New York. It's written with an almost narcotic power and describes vividly the life of a young Puerto Rican hustler, Sinbad, and his loving relationship with a man called Saul.

Saul dies 'with his liver a disaster area, his pancreas a mess', 'a drinker of heroic proportions', and Sinbad looks back over his own life.

One of his earliest recollections is of being seduced by a man in the park. Later on he gets into drugs and prostitution.

The author writes from his own experiences. Like William S. Burroughs there are elements of sexual violence and descriptions of the use of drugs, in his work.

Rogers studied drama and creative writing at college. He taught briefly at Brooklyn where he became simultaneously married and involved in a homosexual affair. During the 60's Rogers travelled round Europe and Mexico, and was arrested and imprisoned for a wide range of offences ranging from fraud and mail theft to grand larceny, making false tax claims, armed robbery, solicitation and drug pedalling. When he was beaten to death by his adopted and disabled son and the friend of his Paul Rogers was forty-eight and suffered from cancer.

A Room in Chelsea Square. Michael Nelson. Gay Men's Press, 1986, £3.95.

Perhaps the best camp epithet for Michael Nelson's 1958 novel would be "wicked". The book appals and delights at the same time; not a single character is likeable, and misogyny is rife, yet the vicious humour makes the effect savoury, not nauseous.

Nicholas, (tarnished) provincial ingenue, is "rescued" by Patrick, a very, very rich, bored, manipulative West End queen. The novel traces how Nicholas attempts to negotiate the web Patrick spins about himself, of which the other main characters have long since fallen foul. Nicholas understands the stakes: his body in exchange for Patrick's patronage, yet he needs to be warned:

"If you show affection for anybody, all they do is despise you. But kick them about and it's a different story. They'll come running after you because they respect you".

His attempts to kick back fail ultimately, Patrick having triumphed in utterly destroying his independence.

Patrick, in his maniacal selfishness, is an uncomfortable reminder of what is most unpleasant about the gay scene. Yet you love to hate him; he is completely oblivious to the empty ugliness of his life. In the introduction to the 1986 edition, Philip Core points out that a failure to see Nelson's humourous intent led critics in the fifties to damn the book out of hand (Betjeman saw it as a bitter attack on homosexuals). The other intriguing reason for its unpopularity was that the characters were based on real members of the British literati of the time: Peter Watson, Cyril Connoly and Stephen Spender.

The humour remains as fresh now as thirty years ago. To one born in the sixties, though, the gay life portrayed seems alien; but as Core says, the novel is an interesting slice of gay life, a life which in the 50s did have an unpleasant premise: the price-tag. In the end, I think, you'll find that the warmth purges the venom.

PHILIP GATTER.

We welcome your comments on all aspects of bisexuality and other topics. Please keep your letters short and address them to The Editor, BI-MONTHLY, Box BM-BI, London WC1 3XX. enclosing your telephone number (not for publication). We would also love to recieve any other contributions

Letters

Dear Editor,

I don't agree with pedofilia.

The main issue seems to be reduction of the age of consent for homosexual sex from 21 years to 16 years, as it is for heterosexual sex. The effort for this political move is in danger of never succeeding if it gets tangled up with the concept of child love. A lot of heterosexual bigotry against gay people comes from the idea of the child molester, which is the man in the dirty rain coat. Such misguided images must be dispelled so gay politics MUST disassociate itself from pedofilia.

The recent article in BI monthly considered the position of the bisexual pedofile. Here again the same must apply, on the issue of age of consent, bisexuals should align themselves with gays. Even though the Bi Monthly should try & be aware of fringe gay issues, pedofilia is counter to our freedom. This is the political perspective.

On the social front, the allowance of sex with minors is wrong on three main accounts.

1. The social system is prone to sexism and physical intimidation, acceptance of pedofilia would probably affect heterosexual life more than gays and this would mean child oppression (even within the family).
2. It would degrade the elderly and tend to isolate them from a 'youth' culture which would become very competitive sexually.
3. The increased spread of disease, children would be difficult to monitor or control, their defence system have not fully built up the capacity for immunity, never mind helping AIDS.

Pedofilia does actually happen anyway, you only have to go to the Far East, some societies make it a framework for relationships. For the over populated Urban western society it has no chance!

Yours sincerely,

Rachel

Dear Tom,

We're writing to complain strongly about an article on Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement in Bi-Monthly 16.

We don't want to argue point-for point against the article's allegations here except to say it was a gross misrepresentation of what happened, and that LGYM is in as healthy state as ever. We want to state clearly that LGYM is not & never has been anti-bisexual. We welcome bisexuals as members, we have bisexual men in the working group, we supported bisexuals threatend with banning from the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, we've attended bisexual conferences, published pro-bisexual articles and so on. Bisexuals were involved in revising our charter at the LGYM Festival in Birmingham last October.

It's nonsense to pretend that asking one man who happens to be bisexual to leave the Working Group amounts to a purge on bisexuality. The issue of heterosexual porn is an entirely different issue, and we stand by our objections to it.

Perhaps you will print this letter to correct any mistaken impressions your readers may have had, since if anything LGYM is healthier than ever, with far more involvement from people outside London, and with strong autonomous internal groups of women, under-17 s and black members making for a real opening up of the organisation.

Yours in anger,

Des pp LGYM Working Group

Dear Tom,

as one of the three 'purged' from LGYM last year, I am writing in support of the article critical of the Lesbian & Gay Youth Movement which appered in your last issue.

Anticipating a defensive reply from LGYM I should first like to point out that the latest issue of their magazine contains two free 'adverts' for WAVAW, an organisation which is not only ant-sm, but also openly anti-pedofile and anti-bisexual. No pro-ped or pro-bisexual articles have been published since the purge last May; & given the post-purge removal of their letters page, this is a welcome forum for debate.

Although on paper LGYM is not & never has been anti-bisexual or anti-pedofile, it was made very clear to me at the time of 'being asked to leave' that 'practising' peds or bisexuals were not welcome or wanted in the working group. I hope this policy (unofficial) has been dropped.

To be fair LGYM almost a year later is at last showing signs that it is getting over its purge; but in reference to LGYM's services acting at a reduced level, does the working group deny that there were only 11 people on last year's Summer Camp, that only two issues of the magazine have appeared this last year?

Let's hope that 1987 will be a more positive year for LGYM, no purges, no smear campaigns, a genuine commitment to support all sexual minorities, and a real opening up of the organisation,

Yours in support,

David Lewis

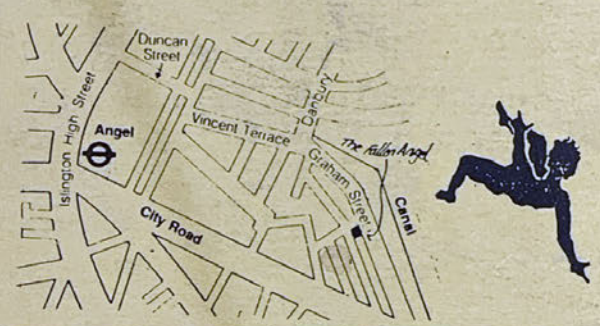
Advertisement

London Bisexual Group

Expand Your Horizons.

The London Bisexual Group meets every Monday at a friendly and pleasant pub in Islington. Here you can enjoy a delicious small meal or sample their choice of local beers before joining us for one of our informal get-togethers or a lively discussion. Hundreds of men and women have done so in the last few years. Why don't you come and make some new friends. You'll be surprised.

THE FALLEN ANGEL HOW TO GET THERE



Meetings start at 8.30pm. For further information write to BM BI London WC1N 3XX.

You never know until you've tried it. LBG.

APRIL
- 6 'Holistic Health'-Pierre.
- 13 'Sexuality and Disability'-Ron Mole.
- 20 Bank Holiday -Social,all welcome
- 27 'Legislation For Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign' - Eric Presland

MAY
- 4 Bank Holiday - Social,all welcome
- 11 'On The Game' - A Talk by STREETWISE Young male prostitutes' support group.
- 18 'Producing Bi-Monthly Magazine' - A Talk by Tom,the Editor.
- 25 Bank Holiday -Social,all welcome.

JUNE
- 1 'Shape Up And Dance' - workshop with Jonathan.
- 8 'The New Politics'-A discussion with Rachel O'Connor.
- 15 'Can A Relationship Between A Gay And A Heterosexual Work' -Video and discussion.

***OTHER DATES:BISEXUAL ACTION GROUP MEETINGS (AT THE LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY CENTRE)
22 APRIL 20 MAY 17 JUNE.
ANNUAL NATIONAL GAY PRIDE MARCH 27 JUNE
NOTE:WHILE THE TALKS ARE ON,THERE WILL BE A PERSONAL GROUP ,LED BY AN EXPERIENCED COUNSELLOR,IN AN ADJOINING ROOM.

Taking the Test

Should bisexuals take the AIDS anti-body positive test ? Opinion is currently divided on the wisdom of taking the AIDS test, and there is growing concern over the lack of confidentiality given to results, as well as active discrimination against AIDS-positive people.Resources are unable to cope with the massive demand for information and counselling, with results that are quite tragic - witness the recent case of the Fulham man attacked by neighbours who discovered him to be Body Positive.

The test takes the form of a small blood sample taken from a vein in the patients arm. While currently reliable, it only shows if you have antibodies to AIDS, not the disease itself. It is not known how many of the people who show positive will go on to develop AIDS. Current figures estimate that approximately 20-30 % of those testing positive will go on to be AIDS victims.

Many gay and bisexual people are thinking of taking the test, largely for peace of mind, or often as a way of strengthening trust with a lover.

Confidentiality

We advise our readers to think very carefully before taking this test, unless they are showing unexplained symptoms of ill-health.

It is best to tell as few people as possible that you are taking the test, just in case you are positive. There is currently no legislation to protect Body Positive people from loosing their jobs, for instance.

It is thought that a Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic will supply the best confidentiality. Unless you have very good reason to think so, your G.P. and his receptionist cannot be trusted to maintain confidentiality.

Apart from discrimination in employment, virtually no insurance companies will accept body positive people as clients. Private health insurance will not pay for AIDS treatment, as it is considered to be self inflicted.

Insurance

Insurance companies have introduced a question on AIDS into all their life insurance application forms, and it is thought that they will soon recquire all single men under 35 to take the AIDS test before they can be accepted for life insurance. So if you're thinking of testing, clear up all mortgage and insurance matters first.

If you are thinking of having the test done, make sure you have access to someone you can talk to about your fears and worries, just in case the result is positive. A positive result will have a psychologically devastating effect - is it worth it - you may not go on to develop the disease in any case.

Unfortunately, it has been shown that body positive women do go on to develop AIDS if they become pregnant, and many bisexual people will wish to test for this reason. Married bisexual people ar forced to consider the health of any future children they might have.

Advice from all experts in the field indicates that it is better to start safer sex practices now, than to rely on the AIDS test.

TOM BROOKS.